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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KCOR](#) [KCRM](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: FORMER GOVERNOR IBORI SAID TO BACK SARAKI  
PRESIDENTIAL BID

REF: ABUJA 0716 (NOTAL)

Classified By: Political Counselor James P. McNulty  
for reasons in Sections 1.4. (B) and (D)

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IBORI NOW SUPPORTING SARAKI BID  
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¶1. (C) A U.S. businessman with close ties to former Delta State Governor James Ibori and Kwara State Governor Bukola Saraki told PolOff October 20 that Ibori has agreed to back financially a presidential bid by Saraki in 2011, should President Yar'Adua become unable or unwilling to run for re-election. Ibori has reportedly broken ranks with associates Aliko Dangote and Andy Uba, who plan to support Bauchi Governor and Yar'Adua son-in-law Isa Yuguda. According to this contact, Ibori anticipates ending up in jail, should Yuguda win the nomination unopposed. Moreover, Ibori reportedly suspects that Uba and Dangote, who made fortunes courtesy of former President Obasanjo, would do their former patron's bidding and persuade Yuguda to prosecute Ibori as retribution for his public support and generous financing of successful opposition to Obasanjo's bid for a third term.

¶2. (C) According to this contact, Ibori plans to finance initially a rival Saraki bid against Yaguda with the understanding that Saraki would eventually withdraw from the race and throw his support to Yuguda in return for Saraki getting a choice Cabinet post, preferably as Finance Minister "to control the purse strings," and appointing an Attorney General preferred by Saraki and Ibori to protect their interests "like this last time with Aondoakaa." Saraki will then run again after what they presume will be eight years of a Yuguda presidency. This contact noted that Ibori even harbored aspirations of serving as Saraki's vice presidential running mate. (See Reftel for details on Saraki's political ambitions.) Such a plan would, in their view, provide 16 years of protection from prosecution for Ibori, and prevent investigation of the Saraki clan's role in the Societe-General bank scandal.

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REBUFF OF GUINEA REGIME  
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¶3. (U) This contact mentioned that the military junta in Guinea had contacted his lobbying firm (based in Washington,

D.C.) to represent them in return for oil and gold concessions. He said he responded, "No way," because of the stadium massacre in Conakry and his assessment that a new government would revoke such enticements anyway. "The only way I'll go there," he declared, "is in a plane to take him (Camara) out of the country."

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COMMENT  
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14. (C) Political machinations have a way of going awry in Nigeria, but it is not surprising that both the former Delta State Governor and the Saraki clan (who are known to be very close associates) would be scheming to insulate themselves against future GON actions against their ill-gotten gains.  
SANDERS